

EXPOSICIONES SOVIÉTICAS: SELLING SOCIALIST MODERNITY IN THE US'S
BACKYARD

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the direction of Donald Raleigh)

In this paper, I discuss these Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture hosted in Mexico City in 1959, Havana in 1960, and Rio de Janeiro in 1962, which served as part of a larger project to familiarize Latin Americans with Soviet culture and achievements. With this “cultural offensive,” as contemporary American observers characterized it, the USSR hoped to attract the attention of “ordinary people.” With their low ticket prices and timely displays—which included the Lunik and Sputnik spacecraft—these exhibitions drew in millions of visitors.

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Introduction

On the afternoon of May 3, 1962, the opening day of the Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology, and Culture in Rio de Janeiro, tens of thousands of people gathered in front of the Palácio de São Cristóvão. In spite of rain, they stood patiently in line waiting for the grand opening. Looking out on a multicolored sea of umbrellas, the event's organizers compared the crowd to a huge flower garden. Hours passed in anticipation. Finally, that evening the exhibition opened for visitors, and the building that normally housed the National Museum of Brazil could not accommodate all those who wished to see "the Soviet Union in miniature."¹ After closing in early June, official Soviet estimates counted a total of over half a million visitors to the exhibition.²

Why did an event like this, sponsored by the Soviet Union, draw such massive crowds in a country where the Brazilian Communist Party had been declared illegal? For decades, fears of leftist subversion had motivated drastic purges of municipal legislatures and mass evictions of urban slum communities "infiltrated" by communist activist organizations in Brazil, yet now the Brazilian government invited the USSR to set up a massive display in the traditionally working-class neighborhood of Imperial de São Cristóvão.³ This was not the first major Soviet exhibition in Latin America either; the Cuban government's recent shift toward radical Marxism had taken place immediately after a similar exhibition in Havana in 1960, which arrived there after a stop

¹ V. Borisov, "Brazilsko-Sovetskaia druzhba budet eshche krepche," *Sovetskaia Estoniia*, 7 Sept. 1962.

² "Ikh bylo polmilliona," *Izvestiia*, 3 June 1962.

³ Brodwyn Fischer, "The Red Menace Reconsidered: A Forgotten History of Communist Mobilization in Rio de Janeiro's Favelas, 1945-1964," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 94 (2014): 1-33.

in Mexico City the previous year. Why did these events appeal to broad audiences of both Latin American leaders and ordinary citizens at the height of the Cold War?

In this paper, I discuss these Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture hosted in Mexico City in 1959, Havana in 1960, and Rio de Janeiro in 1962, which served as part of a larger project to familiarize Latin Americans with Soviet culture and achievements. Other salient aspects of this “cultural offensive,”⁴ as contemporary American observers characterized it, included Latin American tours by Soviet musicians and theatre troupes as well as exchanges of parliamentary delegations. Such high-brow efforts catered to Latin American elites and politicians, while the organizers of these exhibitions primarily hoped to attract the attention of “ordinary people.”⁵ With their low ticket prices and timely displays—which included the Lunik and Sputnik spacecraft—these exhibitions drew in millions of visitors.⁶

Scholars often frame Soviet diplomatic outreach to developing nations within an assumed struggle to maintain the USSR’s position as the leader of world revolution. This model assumes that competition with China for influence over Third World revolutionary movements motivated Soviet leaders to look beyond the Cold War conflict with the West and pay attention to the emerging Global South.⁷ These exhibitions, however, constituted a major effort to bridge the Second and Third worlds that did not cater to local radicals. Instead, Soviet officials wished to appeal to a broad audience and strengthen cultural, economic, and diplomatic exchange by presenting the USSR as a friendly developed nation intent on building mutually beneficial

⁴ Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

⁵ G. Borovik, “Meksikantsy: ‘Rusia [sic] - khorosho!’” *Ogonek*, no. 49, 1959, 2-3.

⁶ Tobias Rupprecht, “Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: The USSR and Latin America in the Cultural Cold War” (PhD diss., European University Institute, 2012), 69-72.

⁷ Ilya Prizel, *Latin America through Soviet Eyes: The Evolution of Soviet Perceptions during the Brezhnev Era, 1964-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

relationships with Latin American states.⁸ Tellingly, the exhibitions lacked displays that emphasized either Marxist-Leninist class struggle or direct confrontation with the West. Rather than highlight the Soviet Union's revolutionary heritage, these exhibitions sought to affirm that Soviet prosperity was an achievable goal that other nations could reach without resorting to violent class struggle.⁹ Notions of social justice and economic equality permeated many of the displays, presented in terms of measurable, practical benefits enjoyed by the USSR's citizens.

In this paper, I seek to analyze how the USSR marketed its society and its successes to a region that Soviet General Secretary Joseph Stalin (1922-52) once labelled "a collection of US satellites."¹⁰ Most countries in Latin America had little contact with the USSR before the late 1950s. Yet by the early 1960s the threat of Soviet influence in that region caused President John F. Kennedy (1961-63) to label it "the most dangerous area in the world."¹¹ The broader "cultural offensive" in Latin America attempted to portray the USSR as an attractive trading partner and a potentially valuable ally to these nations. I argue that these exhibitions, as part of this effort, intended to "normalize" the USSR in the minds of visitors—to make the Soviet Union seem inviting, unthreatening, and friendly—while simultaneously drawing attention to the exceptional achievements of Soviet science and industry. More broadly, my close study of these exhibitions reveals much about how the USSR wished to be perceived by the Third World during this period. How did the USSR, in a region of the world subjected to decades of US influence and anti-Soviet propaganda, attempt to rebrand itself as a modern state, a valuable trading partner,

⁸ Anastas Mikoian, "My za torgovliu, ravnopravnuu i vzaimovygonuiu!" *Pravda*, 30 Nov. 1959.

⁹ S. A. Borisov, "Sovetskii Soiuz i Meksiko," *Novoe Vremia*, no. 50, 1959, 16-17.

¹⁰ Quoted in: Prizel, *Latin America through Soviet Eyes*, 1.

¹¹ Quoted in: Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 7.

and a potential ally? In order to better understand the cultural dimension of Soviet foreign policy in the postwar period, I turn my attention here to Soviet cultural diplomacy in Latin America.

Historiography and Methodology

Although a substantial body of scholarship documents the United States' role in promoting its own model of capitalist modernization to the developing world, including Latin America,¹² only recently have scholars begun to tease out the Soviet influences on Latin American state-building and economic development.¹³ After the fall of the USSR, the majority of scholarship on Cold War culture emphasized the role of American "soft power"¹⁴ in accelerating the Soviet collapse. During this period, economics and culture were fundamentally intertwined in propaganda that advertised how the Soviet Union or United States achieved higher standards of living that allowed their citizens to lead better, more fulfilling lives.¹⁵ Continued focus on the West and its apparent victory in the cultural Cold War generated valuable scholarship on American cultural diplomacy,¹⁶ but its Soviet equivalent remained largely

¹² Michael Adas, *Dominance by Design: Technological Imperatives and America's Civilizing Mission* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

¹³ Tobias Rupprecht, "Socialist High Modernity and Global Stagnation: A Shared History of Brazil and the Soviet Union during the Cold War," *Journal of Global History* 6 (2011): 505-28. Jacqueline Loss, *Dreaming in Russian: The Cuban Soviet Imaginary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013); João Gonçalves, "Sputnik Premiers in Havana: A Historical Ethnography of the 1960 Soviet Exposition," in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Ann Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616 (2008): 94-109.

¹⁵ Susan E. Reid, "Who Will Beat Whom: Soviet Popular Reception of the American National Exhibition in Moscow, 1959," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9 (Fall 2008): 855-904.

¹⁶ See Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998); Nicholas Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

unexamined. Despite the appearance of new scholarship on the Soviet experience that has complicated this one-sided narrative, Khrushchev-era efforts to reshape the USSR's public image in the Third World remain understudied. At the time, these activities caused a great stir among Western observers, who noted that the Soviet Union's rhetoric of peaceful coexistence, national sovereignty, and state-driven industrialization greatly appealed to developing countries.¹⁷ Yet these public diplomacy campaigns have received scarce attention in academic literature.

By using press sources from Latin America, the US, and the USSR, I attempt to reconstruct the Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology and Culture and to account for the primary themes of their displays. Between 1959 and 1962 the Soviet media greatly increased its coverage of Latin American affairs. From 1917 to 1958, an average of 91 articles on Latin America in Soviet papers appeared per year; yet, in the three years between the Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro exhibitions, the Soviet press published an average of 810 titles per year.¹⁸ The Soviet press cited positive visitor responses in guestbooks and conversations with guides as proof that the exhibitions had garnered a positive reception. In addition to coverage in newspapers, articles on the exhibitions appeared in the Soviet monthlies *Promyslovaia kooperatsiia* (Trade Cooperation), *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'* (International Life) and *Vneshniaia torgovlia* (Foreign Trade) and in the popular magazine *Ogonek* (Flame). The journal *Novoe vremia* (New Times), which was published in Spanish, Portuguese and English as well as in Russian, likely aimed to entice an international audience with its favorable coverage of these showcases. Even though many of the articles published in the Soviet press contained more internationalist rhetoric and exhortations against imperialism than details about the exhibitions,

¹⁷ Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

¹⁸ Lev Okinshevych, *Latin America in Soviet Writings: A Bibliography*, ed. Robert G. Carlton (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1966), v.

by reading them we can still learn how the USSR wanted these events to be understood. What kind of responses from Latin American visitors did the Soviet Union hope to provoke? What reactions were “correct” and therefore fit for publication in the Soviet press?

I also consider coverage of these exhibitions in several major Spanish-language periodicals published in Mexico and Cuba. These include the Mexican papers *Excélsior*, *Siempre* (Always), and *El Siglo de Torreon* (The Century of Torreon) as well as the Cuban periodicals *Bohemia* and *INRA* and the Cuban newspaper *Noticias de Hoy* (News of the Day). While the political leanings of these publications range from the center-right perspective of *Excélsior* to the far left leanings of *INRA*, all of these sources present a positive image of the exhibitions and their reception by Latin American audiences. While my lack of facility in Portuguese prevents me from consulting Brazilian press sources, I nonetheless consider the Rio de Janeiro exhibition in this paper because it was the largest Soviet exhibition ever held in a foreign country and received substantial coverage in the Soviet press. In many ways, the Rio exhibition represented the capstone of the Soviet cultural offensive in Latin America.

In addition, I examine discussions of the exhibitions in major American and Spanish newspapers. Both Spain and the US paid special attention to Soviet cultural penetration of Latin America, given their strong ties to the region. These sources often highlight public outcry against the exhibitions, and can help us understand aspects of the Latin American reception of these exhibitions that the Soviet press deliberately ignored or downplayed.

Historical Background

In 1956 at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev articulated his policy of “peaceful coexistence” that became “a fundamental principle of Soviet foreign policy.”¹⁹ Khrushchev trusted that the innate superiority of the socialist system ensured the USSR’s success in the Cold War. During the late 1950s, he began formulating a new party program, formally adopted at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1961, which promised that the USSR would overtake the US in per capita production by 1970 and achieve full communism in 1980. Such heady optimism did not seem wholly unfounded, given the rapid rise of the Soviet GDP and living standards during the 1950s. As Argentinian economist Sergio Bagú noted, the Soviet economy was growing faster than its American counterpart at the time.²⁰

Khrushchev believed that other nations could follow the Soviet example without undergoing violent revolutions. This meant that foreign governments could now be trusted to bring their countries closer to the Soviet model without the intervention of either local communists or the Red Army. Developments within Soviet academia also helped bring about this change. New cadres trained in the developing field of “international relations” promoted an understanding of geopolitics based on the actions of independent states rather than the interests

¹⁹ Nikita Khrushchev, quoted in *Current Soviet Policies II: The Documentary Record of the Twentieth Party Congress and Its Aftermath*, ed. Leo Gruliow (New York: Praeger, 1957), 36-37.

²⁰ Sergio Bagú, *Argentina en el Mundo* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1961), 153-55.

of opposing classes.²¹ The official Soviet discourse fit the developing nations into its policy of peaceful coexistence by calling them, along with the socialist states, a worldwide “peace zone.”²² The Soviet media began to portray the USSR’s diplomatic efforts in the developing nations as a means of integrating the Second and Third worlds, since both shared a common commitment to peace. Western scholars noted that this inclusive rhetoric of world peace possessed broad appeal,²³ and, as will be shown, this theme featured heavily in the Soviet exhibitions in Latin America.

At the same time, however, the USSR’s perception of its relationship with the Third World drew heavily upon its experience developing its own non-European republics. The Soviet press, as well as public statements by Soviet officials addressed to Latin American audiences, frequently compared the developing world to Soviet Central Asia and Caucasia prior to the October Revolution. When explaining to a Cuban journalist his decision to send his First Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoian to Latin America as the USSR’s representative at the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions, Khrushchev pointed out that Armenian-born Mikoian had firsthand experience in the modernization of the Caucasus.²⁴ In a printed address distributed to visitors to the exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, Khrushchev boasted that, thanks to rapid modernization under the Soviet leadership, “the formerly backward borderlands of tsarist Russia—such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia—became flowering republics, culturally and economically surpassing

²¹ William Zimmerman, *Soviet Perspectives on International Relations, 1956-1967* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 26-41.

²² Roger E. Kanet and Donna Bahry, eds, *Soviet Economic and Political Relations with the Developing World* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 30.

²³ Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign Propaganda*, 30.

²⁴ Aleksandr Fursenko, ed. *Prezidium TsK KPSS: 1954-1964* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia Politicheskaia Entsiklopediia, 2003), 884-903.

many highly developed capitalist countries.”²⁵ By implication, just as Soviet rule had created “flowering republics” in its own backward regions, so too could the Soviet example inspire similar change in Latin America. The odd dissonance between the Soviet rhetoric of peaceful coexistence, which stressed that the USSR treated all sovereign nations as equals and rejected the colonial biases of the West, and these discursive vestiges of European paternalism characterized Soviet cultural diplomacy in this period.

During the 1950s, developments in Latin American politics also fostered hopes of closer relations with the Soviet Union. In 1954, the US helped to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Jacobo Árbenz (1951-54) in Guatemala and imposed a rightwing dictatorship in its place. Afterward, the US’s public image in the region sank quickly. Many Latin American progressives began promoting new theories of “developmentalism,” which maintained that economic dependence on the US had caused Latin America’s backwardness.²⁶ As more and more Latin American nations worked to develop stronger business ties with Western Europe and Japan, some also considered the socialist nations as potential trade partners. It was during this same period that Khrushchev began promoting the USSR’s foreign trade, and Mikoian stated that any nation that desired an exhibition of Soviet products “could get it for the asking.”²⁷

Leftist, but not Marxist, governments ran the host countries that invited the three Soviet exhibitions. Both Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-64) and Brazilian President João Goulart (1961-64) viewed closer ties with the USSR as a means of putting pressure on the

²⁵ Nikita Khrushchev, “Poslanie Predsedatelia Soveta Ministrov SSSR N. S. Khrushcheva,” *Vneshniaia torgovlia*, no. 4, 1962, 3-5.

²⁶ Discussed in Ramon Grosfoguel, “Developmentalism, Modernity, and Dependency Theory in Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, 2000: 347-74.

²⁷ “A. I. Mikoian v Meksike,” *Izvestiia*, 31 Nov. 1959.

US, in the hope of receiving fairer treatment in future negotiations with the US. *Novoe vremia* republished a statement from the president of Brazil's Supreme Council of Producers Velasquez Vargas declaring that, despite US warnings that commerce with the USSR would lead to "communist penetration" and "threaten Brazil's national security," "a great many countries maintain trade and diplomatic relations with the USSR and I do not see why Brazil should not do so too."²⁸ As a Brazilian economist noted in 1958, "as red as the Russians may be, they will never change the black color of the raw oil that they sell us or the green color of the coffee beans that they buy from us."²⁹ The fledgling government of Cuba pursued similar ambitions. After the Cuban Revolution ended in early 1959, the new government attempted to renegotiate the terms of the island's sugar trade. Soviet aid and arms could provide much needed insurance in case the US refused to renegotiate and instead tried to crush the new Cuban government.³⁰

In the following sections, I explicate how these exhibitions, merging both newer Khrushchev-era aspects of Soviet society such as an emphasis on socialist consumerism and the space program along with more traditional Soviet themes dating back to the time of Lenin and Stalin, worked to entice Latin American audiences. Given that all three exhibitions contained many similar displays and reflected the same contemporary Soviet self-image, these segments are divided thematically. The first provides an introduction by describing which government organs organized the exhibitions, basic facts such as attendance figures, dates, and location, as well as the experience of some of the Soviet personnel who were sent abroad to facilitate these events. The next three parts describe the displays at the exhibitions in more detail and look at the response they provoked in the Latin American press. These are divided according to the three

²⁸ M. Kremnev, "Braziliia smotrit na vostok," *Novoe vremia*, no. 46 1959: 16-17.

²⁹ Quoted in Rupprecht, "Socialist High Modernity and Global Stagnation," 513.

³⁰ Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 1262-266.

major ideas that stand out as the primary arguments for Soviet superiority made by the exhibitions. In order, they cover: Soviet claims to extraordinary scientific and technical achievement, followed by consumer-oriented displays that aimed to make everyday life in the USSR seem appealing, and finally examples of more traditional cultural display such as the fine arts as well as musical and theatrical performances.

Exhibition Basics

The Soviet Foreign Trade Ministry that put together all three of these exhibitions had organized over eighty international exhibitions and fairs in sixteen countries during the interwar years, as well as an additional sixty-eight exhibitions in twenty-two countries in the first ten years after World War II.³¹ But before 1959 it sponsored only one major event in Latin America, a trade fair in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, in 1955, which drew 2.3 million visitors over forty days.³² Originally intended to appeal to potential business partners, the fair lacked displays covering Soviet cultural topics. Instead, visitors could examine and purchase Soviet harvesting machines, trucks, coal steam cutters, and portable oil well drilling equipment. In response to this resounding Soviet success, the US deployed a new exhibition, “People’s Capitalism,” using Soviet-style rhetoric in the exhibition’s title.³³ This exhibition opened in Mexico, Columbia, Guatemala, Chile, and Bolivia in 1956, but did not receive nearly as many visitors as the Soviet trade fair in Buenos Aires.³⁴

With the Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture in Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil, the Foreign Trade Ministry attempted to duplicate this earlier success. Drawing upon contemporary trends of socialist consumerism and scientific achievement, as well as more

³¹ Mikhail Nestorov, *Uchastie Sovetskogo Soiuz a v mezhdunarodnykh iarmarkakh i vystavkakh* (Moscow: Vneshtorgizdat, 1957).

³² Ivan Bol’shakov, “Uspekhi Sovetskikh vystavok v stranakh Latinskoi Ameriki” in *Na vsekh kontinentakh mira*, ed. Ivan Bol’shakov (Moscow: Pravda, 1962), 87-100.

³³ Rupprecht, “Soviet Internationalism after Stalin,” 304.

³⁴ Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 133.

traditional forms of cultural display through art and performance, these exhibitions intended to appeal to a broad audience of Latin American “political leaders, important businessmen and ordinary people.”³⁵ Each of the exhibitions attracted large numbers of visitors. In Mexico City, a total of over one million people attended the Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology, and Culture—more than any other exhibition in Mexican history.³⁶ The Havana exhibition attracted between 800,000 to a million visitors, one eighth of the total Cuban population and a greater turnout than for Carnival.³⁷ The numbers for the Rio de Janeiro exhibition amounted to around half a million, although unofficially the exhibition staff claimed closer to a million.³⁸

Major reorganizations of Soviet public diplomacy organs as well as an expansion of the Soviet foreign language press set the stage for this new cultural offensive. Two Soviet agencies bore responsibility for this shift. In 1958, the All-Union Organization for Cultural Contacts, or VOKS, was reorganized and renamed the Union of Societies for Friendship, the SSOD, with Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian as president of its Latin American subdivision. While the VOKS had only one combined department for the United States and Latin America, the SSOD quickly developed a refined regional differentiation. Furthermore, the selection of Khachaturian as a figurehead for the organization made perfect sense within the logic of the new Soviet cultural diplomacy. A renowned composer, Khachaturian’s visits delighted cultured Latin American audiences. And as an Armenian, Khachaturian presented a firsthand success story of socialist modernization within the non-European Soviet republics. In his first speech as president of the association, for instance, he reiterated the USSR’s commitment to dealing with the Latin

³⁵ Borovik, “Meksikantsy: ‘Rusia [sic] - khorosho!’” 2.

³⁶ V. Kozyreva, “V gostiakh u Meksikantsev,” *Promyslovaia kooperatsiia*, no. 4, 1960: 26.

³⁷ Bol’shakov, “Uspekhi Sovetskikh vystavok v stranakh Latinskoi Ameriki,” 93.

³⁸ Borisov, “Brazilsko-Sovetskaia druzhba budet eshche krepche.”

American countries as equals, and not exotic dependencies of a rival superpower. “Never will the tropical exoticism, palms and orchids, parrots and alligators keep us from acknowledging the pride of the Latin American peoples, their diligence, their fight, their history, culture, their pursuits and dreams.”³⁹ The State Committee for Cultural Relations, or GKKS, constituted the other major coordinating agency for Soviet cultural diplomacy. Founded in 1957, GKKS supervised the translation of Soviet literature into foreign languages and the formulation of Soviet print media for foreign consumption. As a result of Soviet media reforms in the mid-1950s, these international efforts aimed to represent a newer, more colorful vision of Soviet society. In regular evaluations, the Cultural Department of the Central Committee usually commended the editors, but suggested that the journals address a broader, not only communist, readership by adapting to local customs. This meant the “frequent use of terms such as election, decision, and resolution” as well as “more humor and modern language.”⁴⁰ The GKKS and SSOD participated heavily in the planning of the Exhibitions of Science, Culture, and Technology, and the GKKS provided translators to the exhibitions as well.

The Mexico City and Havana exhibitions were heavily modified versions of a Soviet National Exhibition that took place at the New York Coliseum in the summer of 1959.⁴¹ New displays added after the New York exhibition included various agricultural machinery, photographic equipment and television sets.⁴² Aleksander Shelnov, an economist from the Foreign Trade Ministry, served as the official director of both exhibitions. The Mexican exhibition was staged in the National Auditorium, an ultramodern structure situated near one of

³⁹ Vladimir Pechatnov, “Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War,” *Cold War History* 1 (2000/01): 16.

⁴⁰ Rupprecht, “Soviet Internationalism after Stalin,” 59.

⁴¹ Borisov, “Sovetskii Soiuz i Meksiko.”

⁴² “Exposicion,” *Bohemia*, 14 Feb. 1960: 12.

Mexico City's wealthiest districts on the edge of Chapultepec Park, the largest city park in Latin America. An enormous red banner advertising the USSR wrapped around the auditorium, accompanied by flags of the fifteen Soviet republics linked with the Mexican flag. The exhibition opened on November 21, 1959, and closed on December 15. Within 8,000 square meters, a space much smaller than the New York Coliseum, the exhibition housed 16,000 display units divided into 12 major sections, such as Lunik-Sputnik, Nuclear Energy in the Service of Peace, and The Well-Being of the Soviet Man.⁴³

The exhibition's organizers hired local residents to attach stickers, guerilla marketing style, to trams and buses in order to spread excitement about the event. A quarter-page advertisement in *Excelsior*, part of a series of ads leading up to the opening of the exhibit, announced "Luniks and Sputniks in Chapultepec!" and promised visitors a front-row seat to the Soviet rockets that were "discovering the secrets of the cosmos" along with other scientific advances, including atomic reactors and ultrasound machines. The exhibition also claimed to provide a glimpse at everyday life, "How a Soviet family lives: the home, healthcare, education and leisure."⁴⁴

Initially, the next Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology, and Culture after Mexico City was Sri Lanka, and that exhibition was to open in late 1960, but recent developments in Cuban-Soviet relations led to a change of plans. When Aleksander Alekseev, a KGB operative assigned to observing the Cuban Revolution, met with Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro on October 16, 1959, Castro suggested that the exhibition set to take place in Mexico City should also make its way to Havana. After consuming a meal of fine Soviet caviar and vodka provided by Alekseev, Castro bluntly summed up the goals of Soviet public diplomacy:

⁴³ "SSSR i Meksiko," *Novoe Vremia*, no. 48, 1959: 2-3.

⁴⁴ Advertisement, *Excelsior*, 17 Nov. 1959: 15.

You know what Lenin said, “In order to bring any kind of idea to life, you have to fling it to the masses.” You suggest a slogan to the masses, and the masses should become possessed of it. So now we will spread the slogan “Friendship with the Soviet Union!” and when the public begins to feel that this is necessary, we will reestablish relations.⁴⁵

Despite the ad hoc nature of the request, the Soviet side agreed. However, it played coy by refusing to acknowledge this agreement publicly, officially announcing the impending exhibition in Havana only a week before its opening.⁴⁶ This forced the exhibition’s staff of 90 specialists to quickly enlist the aid of 280 Cuban workers in the assembly of 700,000 kilograms of materials in that short time.⁴⁷

The Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology and Culture it occupied the Palacio de Bellas Artes in the heart of Havana, which traditionally housed collections of Cuban art. The new venue afforded the Soviet exhibition an extra 1,000 square meters of space, and thus the opportunity to add more new displays.⁴⁸ The Havana exhibition ran for three weeks in early 1960, from February 5 to February 25.⁴⁹

Unlike its Mexican and Cuban predecessors, the Brazilian exhibition in 1962 was not an offshoot of any other major Soviet showcase. Soviet experience from the exhibitions in New York, Mexico City, and Havana informed its development. In the Soviet press during this period, Brazil received more coverage than any other Latin American country besides Cuba. Its immense size, population, and resource base attracted analysis by many of the USSR’s new Latin American specialists, whose numbers began to grow following the foundation of the Latin

⁴⁵ Alexander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964: The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 28-29.

⁴⁶ “Mikoyan [sic] Due in Cuba Thursday to Open Show,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 Feb. 1960.

⁴⁷ Antonio Pequeño, “La Exposicion Sovietica en la Habana,” *INRA*, no. 2, 1960: 26.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

⁴⁹ “Vklad v ukreplenie sovetsko-kubinskoj druzhby,” *Pravda*, 28 Feb. 1960.

American Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1961.⁵⁰ The Soviet Exhibition of Science, Technology and Culture in Rio de Janeiro covered 18,000 square meters of space inside the Palácio de São Cristóvão, also known as the Palácio Imperial, which once housed the Brazilian royal family and now served as the national museum of Brazil.⁵¹ The Brazilian exhibition lasted from May 3 to June 3.⁵²

Accessible pricing represented a new strategy for attracting visitors that contrasted with previous Soviet cultural events hosted in Latin America. Performances by Soviet theatre and musical groups in Latin America, as well as screenings of Soviet films, typically had served as a means of obtaining hard currency through ticket sales. This policy had aroused complaints from Soviet embassies and the SSOD, who noted that the US hosted cheap concerts and complimentary film and literature festivals that reached wide audiences.⁵³ The Soviet organizers had decided to forgo monetary gain in order to reach attract more ordinary Latin Americans in a conscious effort to emulate the US's cultural diplomacy. Admission to each exhibition cost one peso, around eight cents in US currency at the time, and students accompanied by teachers could get in free.⁵⁴ A major priority of these exhibitions, attracting schoolchildren reflected a broader Soviet concern with education in Latin America that was developing during this time.⁵⁵

Given the immense turnout for these events, the number of Soviet guides tasked with aiding visitors was quite low. At the Havana display only ninety guides were available to assist

⁵⁰ Cole Blasier, "The Soviet Latin Americanists," *Latin American Research Review*, 16 (1981): 107-12.

⁵¹ V. Borovskii, "Sovetskaia vystavka v Brazílii," *Pravda*, 5 May 1962.

⁵² Borisov, "Brazílsko-Sovetskaia družba budet eshche krepche."

⁵³ Rupprecht, "Soviet Internationalism after Stalin," 66.

⁵⁴ "Mikoyan's [sic] U.S. Attacks Irk Mexicans," *Washington Post*, 24 Nov. 1959.

⁵⁵ B. G. Anan'ev, "Vazhneishie pedagogicheskie problemy latino-amerikanskikh stran," *Sovetskaia pedagogika* no. 1, 1959: 122-34.

attendees.⁵⁶ The lack of fluent Soviet Spanish speakers probably caused this deficit. Many of the Soviet guides at the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions were orphans from the Spanish Civil War who were evacuated to the USSR in the 1930s and grew up to become translators.⁵⁷ After the exhibitions closed, the Soviet press published firsthand accounts from guides retelling stories of enthusiastic Latin American visitors enraptured by Soviet science and culture. According to one guide's recollection of the Rio exhibition, published on September 7, 1962, to coincide with Brazilian Independence Day,

Once, a middle aged man came [to me]. . . . He briefly talked about himself: he was a captain in the [Brazilian] Air Force . . . on the day when Yuri Gagarin flew over Brazil in his space ship, Captain da Silva's son was born. As a sign of respect and love for the Soviet people and the Soviet Union, he called his son Yuri Gagarin Segunda do Silva. When Gagarin visited Brazil, he met his namesake, and agreed to become the child's godfather.⁵⁸

Regardless of its veracity, this was the kind of story about Latin Americans the Soviet media wanted to circulate, an example of heartfelt admiration for Soviet accomplishment. The Brazilian Air Force captain is reduced to the role of captivated onlooker while Gagarin demonstrates Soviet exceptionalism to the whole world. Stunned by this example of Soviet scientific mastery—nonviolent but still an assertion of dominance—the captain names his own son after Gagarin. The good-natured Gagarin then agrees to become the child's godfather, evidence of the USSR's unreserved embrace of its new foreign friends. This vignette reveals how Latin American appreciation of Soviet technological and scientific achievement cemented the USSR's new image as benevolent superpower intent on aiding the developing world.

⁵⁶ Pequeño, "La Exposición Soviética en la Habana," 26.

⁵⁷ Alicia Alted Vigil, Nicholas Marin and Gonzalez Martell, *Los Niños de la Guerra de España en la Unión Soviética: de la Evacuación al Retorno, 1937-1999* (Madrid: Fundación Francisco Largo Caballero, 1999), 211-32.

⁵⁸ Borisov, "Brazilsko-Sovetskaia druzhba budet eshche krepche."

Important Soviet officials opened each of the three exhibitions. Anastas Mikoian, dubbed “Russia’s busiest traveling salesman” by the US press, flew to Mexico City and Havana to open the first two exhibitions.⁵⁹ Mikoian served as the USSR’s foreign trade minister from 1938 to 1949, and is considered a major proponent of the Khrushchev regime’s more open and inviting foreign policy.⁶⁰ Large crowds greeted him at both airports, comprising local workers bused in for the occasion.⁶¹ In Mexico City the crowds greeted Mikoian with a mixture of Spanish and Russian cries of “Viva Mikoian,” “Rusia – khorosho,” and “Druzhiba!” The Mexican Senate granted Mikoian an audience, an honor which, according to Soviet sources, was “not frequently offered to foreign visitors.”⁶²

With his speech to the Senate, Mikoian created something of an incident. While the organizers of the Mexican exhibition consciously deemphasized Soviet ideology and competition with the West, Mikoian—an Old Bolshevik with a communist pedigree dating back to the October Revolution—openly criticized Mexico’s northern neighbor.⁶³ Congratulating the Mexican politicians as fellow revolutionaries fighting the struggle against imperialism, he declared himself a member of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, Mexico’s dominant political party, due to the similarities he presumed between its outlook and that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. According to Mikoian, Khrushchev’s commitment to peace was a direct consequence of his country’s Leninist heritage and ideology.

The state’s first decree after the October Revolution, drafted by V. I Lenin, founder of our party and the Soviet state, was a decree about peace appealing to

⁵⁹ “Mikoyan [sic] Ends Visit to Mexico,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 29, 1959.

⁶⁰ Simon Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London 2006), 192-93, 662.

⁶¹ “Exposicion,” 12.

⁶² Borovik, “Meksikantsy: ‘Rusia [sic] - khorosho!’” 2.

⁶³ “Mikoyan [sic] Atacó a EE.UU., y se Declaró Miembro del PRI,” *Excelsior*, 22 Nov. 1959.

all countries to put an end to war and establish peace. . . . This call, however, fell on deaf ears. . . . Now N. S. Khrushchev has brought before the UN General Assembly a new, expanded proposal for general and complete disarmament, which attracted the attention of the entire world. . . . Compare the first decree about peace, written by Lenin forty-two years ago, and Khrushchev's proposals and you will see that over the entire period the Soviet Union has led the struggle for peace and general disarmament.⁶⁴

These faux pas split the Mexican press' response, occasionally even within the same paper, between praise for the Soviet exhibition, with its technical marvels and nonthreatening tone, and condemnation of Mikoian's imprudent and inflammatory remarks. One piece in *Excélsior*, a paper which otherwise praised the Soviet exhibition, remarked, "It might be said that Mr. Mikoian came to Mexico, not to inaugurate the Soviet exhibition . . . but rather to attack our neighbors to the north, with the intent of prejudicing us against them."⁶⁵

Mikoian also created controversy in Cuba on the opening day of the Havana exhibition. After an introduction by the Cuban Minister of Commerce Raúl Cepero Bonilla, Mikoian gave a public speech about the Soviet-Cuban partnership's struggle against imperialism and the connection between the revolutionary heritage of Cuba and the USSR. "Indeed, while surveying the exhibition, vividly imagine all the great historical significance of the October Revolution for the destiny of mankind."⁶⁶ Mikoian then laid a ceremonial wreath on a statue of José Martí, Cuba's national poet. In response, a group of local students and priests tore the wreath off the statue and began an anti-Soviet protest. Cuban police put a stop to the demonstration, arresting nineteen of the students.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "A. I. Mikoian v Meksike."

⁶⁵ "Mikoyan [sic] Atacó a EE.UU., y se Declaró Miembro del PRI."

⁶⁶ "Vse slyshnee golos narodov, prizyvaiushikh k miru," *Pravda*, 7 Feb. 1960.

⁶⁷ "Diecinueve Estudiantes Cubanos Detenidos," *ABC Sevilla*, 7 Feb. 1960.

Perhaps due to fear of another such incident, the USSR dispatched Minister of Foreign Trade Nikolai Patolichev to open the Brazilian exhibition. In spite of President Goulart's new policy of friendly engagement with the USSR, many Brazilian politicians remained strongly anticommunist, so Patolichev made sure to keep his rhetoric light and humorous and to deemphasize ideology and underscore the practical benefits of closer Soviet-Brazilian relations. "As is frequently the case in relations between countries with differing social systems, resumption of Brazilian-Soviet contacts begins with the resumption of trade ties—thriving international trade makes for peace and friendship."⁶⁸ On the opening day of the exhibition, Patolichev signed a trade contract with the fervent anticommunist Carlos Lacerda, the governor of the state of Guanabara and one of the leading opponents of Goulart and the Brazilian Left.⁶⁹ Appearing on Brazilian television, Patolichev adeptly maintained a casual, jocular tone. When asked about his expectations regarding the forthcoming World Cup in Chile, Patolichev replied, "I wish the Brazilian team every success and the Soviet team victory."⁷⁰

Regardless of the personalities of the men responsible for opening these events, the Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Culture, and Technology epitomized the optimism and inclusivity that characterized Soviet diplomacy in the Khrushchev era. They served two important functions. At the most basic level, they promoted closer trade relations between Latin America and the Soviet Union by showcasing what products and machinery the USSR could offer. At the time, the Soviet press, including the growing number of newspapers and magazines translated for foreign consumption, espoused a new Soviet commitment to building mutually beneficial

⁶⁸ "Ministr Vneshnei Torgovli N. S. Patolichev o Sovetsko-Brazil'skikh otnosheniakh," *Novoe vremia*, no. 21, 1962: 16-17.

⁶⁹ "Sovmestnoe sovetsko-brazil'skoe kommiunike o prebyvanii v Braziliu ministra vneshnei torgovli SSSR N. S. Patolicheva," *Vneshniaia torgovlia*, no. 6, 1962: 7-8.

⁷⁰ "Ministr Vneshnei Torgovli N. S. Patolichev o Sovetsko-Brazil'skikh otnosheniakh," 17.

international trade networks for the purpose of promoting world peace, and these exhibitions reflected this discursive shift.⁷¹ More importantly, they also increased Soviet influence and soft power in the region by legitimizing the USSR as a modern, developed nation capable of serving as a role model for Latin America. By reflecting the liberalizing and modernizing trends of the Khrushchev era, these exhibitions rebranded the Soviet Union while magnifying its prestige.

At a lunch meeting with the National Association of Mexican Importers and Exporters, Mikoian stated that the primary goal of the exhibitions was to “remove the sediment of the Cold War”⁷² that obscured Latin America’s understanding of the Soviet Union. “[Visitors will] acquire a closer knowledge of Soviet life, better understand the interests and aspirations of the Soviet people, and form a more comprehensive picture of Soviet achievements.”⁷³ At the time, US propaganda asserted that the USSR sought to promote violent revolutions. Adolf Berle, head of the Kennedy administration’s interdepartmental task force on Latin American affairs, insisted in public lectures that “Leninist dogma requires communists to believe that no other kind of revolution is worth having.”⁷⁴ The Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture countered this rhetoric by demonstrating the Soviet commitment to peace, trade, and cooperation. Exhibits with titles such as “Nuclear Energy in the Service of Peace” demonstrated the USSR’s commitment to use its scientific achievements responsibly, while commercial stalls

⁷¹ N. Ivanov, “Leninskii printsip mirnogo sushestvovaniia i vneshniaia torgovlia,” *Vneshniaia torgovlia*, no. 4, 1962: 9-10.

⁷² Quoted in Andrianov, “V gorode vechnoi vesny,” 16.

⁷³ Borisov, “Sovetskii Soiuz i Meksiko,” 16.

⁷⁴ Adolph Berle, *The Cold War in Latin America: The Brien McMahon Lectures* (Storrs: The University of Connecticut, 1961), 14; Jonathan Schwarz, *Liberal: Adolph A. Berle and the Vision of an American Era* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1987), 325-334.

and trade experts at the events worked to sell all types of Soviet products, from industrial machinery to kitchen appliances, to interested visitors who could afford them.⁷⁵

American depictions of Soviet poverty and backwardness presented additional obstacles that needed to be overcome. Thus, it was important to show that Soviet technological and economic achievements had improved the lives of ordinary Soviet citizens. Soviet press articles, featuring quotations from exhibition guest books and conversations with guides, quoted testimonials wherein visitors described how, after the viewing exhibitions, they “now see the world differently,” and believe in the Soviet “policy of peace and friendship.”⁷⁶ For example, “this exhibition shows what can be achieved by people unified in their desire to fight for prosperity and peace in the whole world. I wish that soon all the nations united for the benefit of humanity. Peace and friendship!” Oftentimes these pieces would not mention the names of the people who left these notes, ascribing statements such as this to an “ordinary Mexican.”⁷⁷

The USSR hoped to supplant the US and Europe as the model of development toward which Third World nations strove, and this logic motivated efforts to prove the superiority of Soviet-style modernization. From its foundation, the USSR portrayed itself as a rapidly modernizing state that would lead the world into the future. Now that the Soviet Union was a superpower in a rapidly decolonizing world, however, the exhibits served to educate developing nations “to open their eyes to the reality” of the Soviet success story, “to help lift the veil of false propaganda that was thrown over them.”⁷⁸ While still maintaining its rhetorical commitment to social justice and the equitable distribution of wealth, the official Soviet discourse on modernity

⁷⁵ M. Meshcheriakov, “Sovetskaia vystavka v Meksike,” *Vneshniaia Torgovlia*, no. 1 1960: 5-7.

⁷⁶ V. Borovskii, “My teper’ inache smotrim na mir,” *Pravda*, 23 Feb. 1960.

⁷⁷ Meshcheriakov, “Sovetskaia vystavka v Meksike,” 6-7.

⁷⁸ “Otvety A. I. Mikoiana na voprosy redaktsii kubinskogo zhurnala INRA,” *Pravda*, 15 Feb. 1960.

underwent radical changes during the Khrushchev period. The most notable new development was a growing emphasis on both Soviet scientific achievement and socialist consumerism. The content of the exhibitions reflected these new developments, as I will show in the next two sections.

Science and Technology

The launch of Sputnik in 1957 heralded a new era in which the USSR could credibly claim world leadership in science. Combined with achievements in the peaceful use of nuclear power, this early Soviet lead in the space race stunned Latin American observers, with some even recalling this event as the first time they ever heard of the Soviet Union.⁷⁹ The Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture capitalized on this by displaying Soviet technology's most cutting-edge innovations as a means of generating both enthusiastic interest in and awestruck respect for the Soviet Union. At the same time, displays of Soviet technology reaffirmed the traditional Soviet fixation on mastering the forces of nature. They defined Soviet power in terms of the USSR's ability to overcome environmental, human, and even terrestrial boundaries.

Spaceflight was a major theme of all three exhibitions. Nothing else confirmed that the USSR could make the impossible possible quite like the successes of the Soviet space program. In conjunction with the opening of the Mexican exhibition, the Soviet international weekly *Novoe vremia* published a political cartoon showing a Mexican family, clothed in ponchos and sombreros, looking up in the sky at a Soviet *Lunik* capsule and exclaiming “and just think, all this has been done by a country that used to be underdeveloped!”⁸⁰ At the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions, a photo of the dark side of the moon, an absolute novelty for the time, featured prominently. The other main attractions, one genuine Lunik and three models of the Sputnik

⁷⁹ Aleksei Adzhubei, *Na raznykh shirotakh* (Moscow: Pravda, 1959); Luis Soto, *Un verano en Siberia* (Druzhba Ediciones 2008), <http://druzhba.se/druzhba/vivencias/unveranoensiberia.pdf> : 30

⁸⁰ “V Sovetskoi vystavke v Meksike,” *Novoe vremia*, no.51, 1959: 11

spacecraft suspended above onlookers, also drew immense attention.⁸¹ One particularly fanciful display, “a marble model of Moscow University suspended symbolically against the heavens,” invited young exhibition goers to apply to this prestigious university.⁸² The Brazilian exhibition housed the *Vostok 1* and *Vostok 2* spacecraft and models of various moons, as well as photographs and posters of Yuri Gagarin, billed as “the Columbus of the Cosmos.”⁸³

Other displays echoed the theme of Soviet exceptionalism with examples of Soviet mastery over nature that produced more practical benefits for ordinary citizens. The Nuclear Energy in the Service of Peace section of the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions included a scale model of the Soviet ship *Lenin*, the world’s first nuclear-powered icebreaker, which exhibition goers could freely touch.⁸⁴ Sections on energy production in the USSR at each exhibition housed elaborate scale models of hydroelectric dams. At the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions, the Stalinist era Dneprostroi dam made an appearance, while the more ambitious Bratsk hydroelectric dam in Siberia, still undergoing construction but set to become the world’s single biggest power producer, featured prominently in Rio.⁸⁵ Other modes of power generation, including early atomic and solar power, also wowed guests. The Brazilian exhibition demonstrated the potential uses of some of the earliest solar batteries.⁸⁶ The USSR took a keen

⁸¹ Borisov, “Sovetskii Soiuz i Meksiko”; Pequeño, “La Exposicion Sovietica en la Habana,” 27.

⁸² Pequeño, “La Exposicion Sovietica en la Habana,” 28.

⁸³ Gennadii Krasnitskii, *Ot Rio-de-Zhaneiro do Montevideo* (Tashkent: Gosizdat UzSSR, 1964), 58; Borisov, “Brazilsko-Sovetskaia druzhba budet eshche krepche.”

⁸⁴ “Exposicion,” 12.

⁸⁵ V. Borovskii, “Meksikantsy teper’ vidiat, gde pravda i gde lozh’,” *Pravda*, 7 Dec. 1959; Borovskii, “Sovetskaia vystavka v Brazili.”

⁸⁶ M. V. Nesterov, “Vstrechi v Rio-de-Zhaneiro,” *Pravda*, 3 May 1962.

interest in the possibility of aiding Latin American nations with electric power generation and securing contracts to build hydroelectric dams and atomic power plants in the region.⁸⁷

The USSR likewise suggested it could aid Latin America by supplying the latest in medical technology. At the Cuban exhibition, visitors could look through a UV microscope to observe various samples of microorganisms. One noteworthy display demonstrated a machine that could sew up a patient's artery in seconds. The Cuban exhibition featured film projections of experiments on live animals.⁸⁸ Soviet biological and medical science also got their own displays at the Brazilian exhibition, where the Foreign Trade Ministry made samples of Soviet surgical and optical equipment available for viewing and purchase by Latin American medical professionals.⁸⁹

Both the public and the press response to Soviet science and industry at the exhibitions was the most uniformly positive reaction these events inspired. Many of the positive responses left in guestbooks focused on this theme. "Although I don't share your ideology, congratulations to you for your economic and technical developments!"⁹⁰ Even the more conservative papers *Excelsior* and *Bohemia* noted the USSR's impressive ability to overcome and master its natural surroundings, setting an example for the economically underdeveloped but resource rich countries of Latin America. "[The exhibition provides] a practical demonstration of how the Soviet Union was able to direct human effort and thought to the creation of an abundance of

⁸⁷ V. Ia., "Rasvitiie iadernoi energetiki v stranakh Iuzhnoi i Tsentral'noi Ameriki," *Atomnaia energiia* no. 5, 1960: 467-70; *Primenenie gidrotsiklonov na fabrike Chukvakamata*, "Tsvetnye metally" no. 6, 1959: 102-03.

⁸⁸ "Exposicion," 11.

⁸⁹ "Ministr Vneshnei Torgovli N. S. Patolichev o Sovetsko-Brazil'skikh otnosheniakh."

⁹⁰ "Vse slyshnee golos narodov, prizyvaiushikh k miru."

material values. . . . We should learn from Soviet achievement."⁹¹ Notably, when picking citations from Latin American press sources to spotlight the enthusiasm the exhibitions generated, Soviet papers almost always chose descriptions of Soviet technical marvels because they so closely aligned with the intended message of those displays. For example, a piece in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (Truth) quoted an article in the Mexican paper *Siempre*, in which journalist Antonio Rodrigues affirmed that he now understood that the USSR was a developed nation. According to him, despite American propaganda that “denied that these peoples were capable of producing anything but bread and beets, saying that the Soviet Union cannot take the path of modern science and technology,” the Mexican people knew “where the truth is and where the lies are” thanks to the Soviet exhibition.⁹²

⁹¹ “Realidad y Propaganda.”

⁹² Quoted in Borovskii, “Meksikantsy teper’ vidiat, gde pravda i gde lozh”.

Consumer Goods

Promoting Soviet consumerism during his time in power, Khrushchev stated that this was important “not only to provide people with good homes, but also to teach them . . . to live correctly.”⁹³ A high standard of living would inculcate desired manners and virtues in order to speed the USSR’s transition to communism. This resulted in changes to the official discourse, as homes stocked with a plentiful assortment of appliances and domestic comforts became an essential part of the new image of Soviet progress. For this reason, the Soviet press detailed long lists of the products on display at the exhibitions. For instance, one article about the exhibition in Rio mentioned “watches, motorcycles, bicycles, household electronics, radios, televisions, cameras, tableware, crystal, carpets, furs, shoes, musical instruments” alongside lists of industrial machinery and technological displays featured at that event.⁹⁴ While many of these items remained inaccessible to ordinary Soviet citizens, the decision to include lists like this in almost all reports echoed the abiding optimism of Soviet public discourse in the Khrushchev era. To that end, sections displaying a model Soviet home and the “Well-Being of the Soviet Man” presented visitors with a wide array of consumer luxuries supposedly available in the USSR. According to the American press, however, the model Soviet home inspired disbelief because it was so well-

⁹³ Quoted in Susan E. Reid, “The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40 (2005): 295.

⁹⁴ Nesterov, “Vstrechi v Rio-de-Zhaneiro.”

appointed. In one anecdotal account, a group of Mexicans remarked, “We didn’t know Soviet workers lived so well,” to which a Soviet guide replied “Neither did I.”⁹⁵

When describing the reasons for the Havana exhibition on its opening day, Minister of Commerce Bonilla explained, “Cubans don’t consume Soviet goods. Cubans don’t know about Soviet progress and science besides atomic missiles and space rockets. Here we will learn how Soviet citizens live.”⁹⁶ In Cuba, the Latin American country with more televisions per capita than any other,⁹⁷ the Soviet exhibition demonstrated the sophistication of broadcast technology in the USSR. Displays assured visitors that the USSR’s million television owning households had plenty of programming from which to choose.⁹⁸ At the exhibition’s shops, Cuban visitors could purchase Soviet televisions as well as the same caviar and vodka with which the KGB had plied Castro. Demand for Soviet watches at the Havana exhibition overwhelmed the event’s organizers. According to one account, Cubans purchased “books, magazines, stamps, cigarette cases, canned food, vodka; but what really attracts Cubans is the watches. How many have been sold? Thousands. And thousands more will be sold until none are left.”⁹⁹

The Brazilian exhibition offered an even greater variety of Soviet goods for viewing and purchase: fine furs, motorcycles, crystal dinnerware, carpets, and musical instruments, as well as the latest fashions in Soviet clothing and footwear.¹⁰⁰ The exhibition hosted a fashion show, where young Soviet women modeled short skirts and other trendy outfits. A similar event

⁹⁵ “Mikoyan [sic] Ends Visit to Mexico.”

⁹⁶ Quoted in “Sovetskaia vystavka v Gavane otkryta,” *Izvestiia*, 7 Feb. 1960.

⁹⁷ Louis Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 296.

⁹⁸ “Exposicion,” 12.

⁹⁹ Justina Alvares, “Miles de relojes se venden todos los dias en la Exposicion...” *Noticias de Hoy*, 18 Feb. 1960.

¹⁰⁰ Nesterov, “Vstrechi v Rio-de-Zhaneiro.”

occurred during the New York exhibition three years prior, prompting Latin American reporters to favorably compare the beauty and grace of the Russian women to the “scrawny Western models.”¹⁰¹ Such a favorable response likely motivated the show in Rio.

While the overall reception of the consumer-oriented displays from Latin American audiences was mixed, in a few instances they provoked open hostility. An article published in *Bohemia* reminded Cuban readers of “what they [the USSR] did not bring to the Soviet exhibition” in Havana.¹⁰² In contrast to the photos of excited crowds gathered around Soviet displays published in many Latin American magazines and papers, including *Bohemia* itself, this article showed dismal pictures of dilapidated housing and empty shops found in the Eastern Bloc. The piece warns readers not to admire Soviet socialism simply because it put a man in space. Furthermore, in an ironic homage to the stickers plastered around Mexico City advertising the exhibition there, some visitors took it upon themselves to place signs at the various commercial displays that read, “this product was made with slave labor.”¹⁰³ It seems that, despite a broad consensus in Latin American society that held Soviet scientific achievement in high regard, there were still many who refused to believe that the USSR had become a land of abundant consumer plenty.

¹⁰¹ Insert, *El Siglo de Torreon*, 5 July 1959: 8.

¹⁰² “Lo que no trae la exposicion Sovietica!” *Bohemia*, 14 Feb. 1960: 70.

¹⁰³ “Mikoyan’s [sic] U.S. Attacks Irk Mexicans.”

Fine Arts and Cultural Performance

While the focus on technology and material culture in many of the displays highlighted the importance of the concepts in defining the USSR, more traditional forms of cultural performance also played a role in showcasing the Soviet Union in Latin America. During the Khrushchev period, the USSR sought to take part in the increasing globalization of world culture. In doing so, it pursued two distinct strategies that had their roots in the Stalinist culture of the 1930s. One of these strategies aimed to overcome the influence of US pop culture by catering to more refined sensibilities. The old Soviet fixation on *kul'turnost*, on the ability of high culture such as opera and ballet to elevate the sensibilities of the masses, appealed greatly to Latin American elites who had grown increasingly wary of the impact American cultural forms had on their youth.¹⁰⁴ According to the Chilean communist Julieta Campusano

Those who we call the Coca-Cola generation wear t-shirts, dance rock n' roll, chew gum and imitate everything from the Yankees. . . . They are victims of the corrosive impact of US films and those hideous North American criminal novels. . . . Our intellectuals, however, still know the Russian authors of the past. We follow the political life, the scientific discoveries and cultural achievements of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, the Stalinist concept of “friendship of the peoples” found its second wind as the USSR discovered the Global South. By mutually appreciating each other’s distinct national folklore and traditions, Soviet cultural officials stressed that both the USSR and Latin America would be able to develop their own cultures on their own terms. As they put it, only “truly national art, flamingly patriotic, helps prevent the blind mimicry of decadent foreign [Western]

¹⁰⁴ Rupperecht, “Soviet Internationalism after Stalin” 88-91.

¹⁰⁵ Julieta Campusano, “Kommunisty i molodezh’,” *Problemy mira i sotsializma* no. 1, 1962: 70

models.”¹⁰⁶ Taken together, this emphasis on exchanges of both folk and high culture constituted an alternative mode of cultural globalization intended to appeal to both nationalist and elitist sensibilities.

Veteran Soviet musicians and dancers made their way to the exhibitions to demonstrate the magnificence of Soviet culture. Shostakovich and Khachaturian sold out concerts held in conjunction with the Mexican and Cuban exhibitions, with prominent political leaders such as López Mateos and Fidel Castro in attendance.¹⁰⁷ Dancers from the Bolshoi Theatre performed in order to promote the Mexican exhibition. At the Brazilian exhibition, the celebrated Berezka ensemble performed Russian folk dances before touring the rest of Latin America.¹⁰⁸

Soviet cinema and literature also played an important role in justifying Soviet claims to cultural superiority. Khrushchev had encouraged Soviet filmmakers to produce movies that excelled in their “artistic power and execution,” with an eye toward competition with Western films.¹⁰⁹ This policy paid off when Mikhail Kalatozov’s *The Cranes are Flying* won the Palme d’Or at Cannes, and Soviet cinema became a major component of Soviet cultural outreach. Each of the exhibitions housed its own small movie theatre, with twenty projection rooms showing a continuous run of Soviet documentary and feature films.¹¹⁰ Mirroring the example of previous American literature festivals in the region, the exhibition in Mexico City offered a reading room stocked with Soviet and Russian literary classics, and copies of some books, as well as the Soviet

¹⁰⁶ Vera Kuteishchikova and Lev Ospovat, “Progressivnaia kul’tura Latinskoi Ameriki,” *Sovetskaia literatura* 6, (1956): 212-17.

¹⁰⁷ “Kontsert Sovetskikh artistov v Gavane,” *Pravda*, 9 Feb. 1960; “Sovetskie kompozitory v SShA i Meksike,” *Sovietskaia Muzyka*, no. 1 1960: 180-81.

¹⁰⁸ Iu. Gvozdev, “Triumf ‘Berezki’ v Latinskoi Amerike,” *Muzykal’naia zhizn’*, no. 23 (1962): 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Margaret Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: the Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 123-24; “Exposicion,” 11; V. Chichkov, “Meksiko i SSSR stanoviatsia blizhe,” *Pravda*, 4 Feb 1960.

¹¹⁰ “Troops Will Guard Russian Show in Rio,” *The New York Times*, 22 May 1962.

Constitution, were available for purchase.¹¹¹ The USSR even donated a large collection of Soviet literature to the Havana library system on the opening day of the Cuban exhibition.¹¹²

Not all of the Soviet cultural products on display, however, provoked positive responses. Stalls at all three exhibitions featured Soviet oil paintings and sculpture. While photos of impressive works of Soviet sculpture made their way into Latin American magazine articles about the exhibits, Soviet paintings are noticeably absent. Criticism of Soviet painting appeared even in the leftwing Mexican journal *Siempre*, which unfavorably compared the Socialist Realist works on display with the Modernist style of native communist painter Diego Rivera and asked “Is this socialism? . . . There is no socialism where you cannot produce art.”¹¹³

Some even reacted violently to the Soviet cultural attractions at these events. On the evening of May 20, an anonymous tip warned Brazilian authorities about a bomb planted in the Soviet exhibition. They then forced visitors to evacuate the exhibition for two days until they located the homemade explosive, comprised of twelve sticks of dynamite attached to a clock timer, found in one of the projection rooms.¹¹⁴ The bomber intended to blow up the whole Soviet movie theater as well as presumably any Brazilians interested in Soviet film. Jose Chaves Lameirão, a retired officer with a history of psychiatric issues, confessed to the crime. After this incident, local Brazilian authorities stepped up security. While the US press stressed that the mentally unstable Lameirão acted alone, the Soviet media drew a connection between his actions

¹¹¹ Kozyreva, “V gostiakh u Meksikantsev.”

¹¹² “Sovetskaia vystavka v Gavane otkryta.”

¹¹³ Víctor Galán, “La Exposición Rusa: ¿Eso es el Socialismo?,” *Siempre*, 16 Dec. 1959: 7.

¹¹⁴ “Brazil Finds Bomb in Soviet Exhibit,” *The Washington Post*, 21 May 1962; “Troops Will Guard Russian Show in Rio.”

and those of a mysterious cabal of anti-Soviet forces.¹¹⁵ These subversives supposedly opposed both closer ties between the USSR and Brazil as well as the leftwing policies of the Goulart presidency. *Pravda* repeated a claim made in the Brazilian paper *Gazeta de Notícias* (Gazette of News) that agents sent by Carlos Lacerda had actually carried out the attack.¹¹⁶ Simultaneously, the Soviet press also insisted that Goulart himself had no knowledge of this plot and that, “in Brazil the government and the general public condemn the actions of enemies of friendship between Brazil and the USSR.”¹¹⁷

The Soviet press also spotlighted much more positive responses to these exhibitions from Latin American audiences. One engrossing article in *Pravda* featured a letter from a Mexican professor named Ramon Carranza who came to love Soviet films and novels after encountering them at the Soviet exhibition. He purportedly wrote, “why has there been such sudden interest in Mexico about Soviet culture and life in the Soviet Union? In the capital of our country a recent event took place that was very important for the friendship between our peoples. The event—the Soviet exhibition in Mexico.”¹¹⁸ Proclaiming his newfound belief that the USSR is a mighty nation devoted to peace and mutual cooperation with the entire world, Carranza responded to his encounter with Soviet culture by learning Russian in order to engage more fully with it and teach students how to do the same, thereby breaking the barriers that inhibit closer cooperation with the USSR. The media thus presented Soviet audiences with the notion that their language was

¹¹⁵ “Intsident na Sovetskoi vystavke,” *Izvestiia*, 22 May 1962.

¹¹⁶ “Otpor provakatoram,” *Pravda*, 25 May 1962.

¹¹⁷ “Intsident na Sovetskoi vystavke.”

¹¹⁸ Chichkov, “Meksiko i SSSR stanoviatsia blizhe.”

becoming more popular worldwide, and that ordinary Latin Americans were motivated to study Russian because of their fascination with Russian culture and achievements.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Gerardo Sierra, "Izuchaiu russkii iazyk," *Novoe vremia* no. 15, 1960: 29; "Pis'mo chitatelia iz Kuby," *Novoe vremia* no. 16, 1960: 9.

Outcomes

In many ways, the Soviet exhibition in Havana set the stage for the close Soviet-Cuban partnership that lasted until the collapse of the USSR. Before the Soviet exhibition, the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-61) negotiated with the revolutionary regime to insure that Cuba would remain a US ally and that American businesses on the island would not be nationalized. The new Cuban government had no formal diplomatic relations with the USSR, and the Soviet press barely mentioned the Cuban revolution.¹²⁰ After the Soviet Union hosted the exhibition in Havana, the fervently anticommunist Eisenhower administration drastically cut US imports of Cuban sugar, expecting this to create an economic crisis on the island. Instead, the USSR stepped in to purchase the unsold sugar and extended generous offers of credits and Soviet technicians to the island. Soviet national and local papers began printing articles about Cuba and its heroic struggle. Cuba quickly became a cultural phenomenon in the USSR, and Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist.¹²¹ Some historians argue that the Soviet exhibition in Havana set off this chain of events.¹²²

Thankfully, since the exhibition in Havana was held before the advent of censorship on the island, diversity of opinion can be found in the reactions of the Cuban press to the Soviet displays. Both *Bohemia*, an older publication known to speak for Cuba's left-leaning middle class, and *INRA*, the official magazine of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform and a

¹²⁰ Jacques Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1978), 8-13.

¹²¹ Peter Bourne, *Fidel: A Biography of Fidel Castro* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1986) 230-34, Petr Vail' and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001), 55.

¹²² Levesque, *The USSR and the Cuban Revolution*: 9-20; Sergo Mikoian, *Anatomiia Karibskogo krizisa* (Moscow: Akademiia, 2006), 34-39.

mouthpiece for the Cuban government, featured extensive coverage of the events. *INRA* maintained a consistently positive tone, even going so far as to parrot Soviet claims to having invented the radio and the airplane.¹²³ In contrast, *Bohemia* consciously measured the Soviet achievements on display against the history of Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe, particularly Hungary, and advocated taking claims that Soviet citizens experienced consumer plenty with grain of salt.¹²⁴

The exhibition in Brazil fostered very different results. The Goulart presidency, which endured ceaseless criticism for its leftism, faced accusations that commercial and diplomatic connections with the USSR created a conduit for communist infiltration and subversion.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, this policy paid major dividends—trade deals signed during the exhibition raised the total value of Brazilian-Soviet trade from \$42 million to \$140 million.¹²⁶ Goulart possessed even grander ambitions, stating in an interview with *Pravda* that “although trade with the Soviet Union has so far been carried out very effectively, I believe that it will expand even more after Brazil takes measures to initiate trade with all the countries of the socialist bloc.”¹²⁷ After the exhibition, Goulart proposed traveling to Moscow to open a Brazilian exhibition there. He did not get that chance. The decision to allow a Soviet exhibition into the country greatly upset the US, given the Cuban example.¹²⁸ In 1964, the US worked with rightist elements in the Brazilian

¹²³ Pequeño, “La Exposicion Sovietica en la Habana.”

¹²⁴ “Lo que no trae la exposicion Sovietica!”

¹²⁵ Ruth Leacock, *Requiem for Revolution: The United States and Brazil, 1961-1969* (Kent State University Press: Kent, 1990), 110-11.

¹²⁶ “Ministr Vneshnei Torgovli N. S. Patolichev o Sovetsko-Brazil’skikh otnosheniakh.”

¹²⁷ V. Borovskii, “Luchshii put’ k sotrudnichestvu narodov,” *Pravda*, 24 May 1962.

¹²⁸ Adolph Berle, *Navigating the Rapids, 1918-1971*, ed. Beatrice Berle and Travis Jacobs (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 771-72.

military to oust Goulart in a coup d'état, motivated in large part by fears of communist influence over the Brazilian government.¹²⁹ The exhibition succeeded, however, in convincing even the most conservative Brazilians that the USSR had much to offer as a trading partner. From 1965, the economist Roberto Campos presided over the newly established Brazilian Ministry for Economic Planning and Coordination. His first foreign trip as representative of the anticommunist military junta took him to the Soviet Union, where he was received with all honors and showed around the USSR for a week.¹³⁰ Campos had no sympathies for Soviet socialism but pragmatically saw the advantages of trade and collaboration. As a result, Brazil became a major commercial partner of the USSR. In 1972 a Soviet trade fair opened in São Paulo, and Brazilians hosted their own expo in Moscow in 1974, fulfilling Goulart's ambition despite his exile.¹³¹

Mexico experienced the least noteworthy outcome from its encounter with "the Soviet Union in miniature," at least in the short term. While a small minority protested the exhibition in Mexico City, the USSR was not a total newcomer to Mexico and most people took little consideration of any imagined communist threat. At the same time, moreover, commercial possibilities remained limited because Mexico and the USSR possessed incompatible export profiles, as both nations primarily exported hydrocarbons and manufactured goods and imported agricultural products.¹³² Reactions to the exhibitions in the Mexican press were mixed, with both right- and left-leaning publications praising some elements while criticizing others. Both the conservative *Excelsior* and the socialist *Siempre* praised the Soviet technical achievements on

¹²⁹ Leacock, *Requiem for Revolution*, 126-35.

¹³⁰ Eduardo Galeano, *Las Venas Abiertas de America Latina* (Montevideo: Universidad de la Republica, 1971), 350.

¹³¹ I. Goranskii, "Na Sovetskoi vystavke v Sao-Paulo," *Latinskaia Amerika*, 1 1973: 161-66

¹³² Prizel, *Latin America through Soviet Eyes*, 158.

display, but the former took issue with Mikoyan's visit and speech to the Mexican Senate while the latter criticized the displays of banal socialist realist paintings.¹³³ The threat of Castroist subversion provoked by the Cuban regime's turn toward Marxist-Leninism, however, helped to discredit the leftist Mateos. After his presidential term ended in 1964, the Institutional Revolutionary Party—Mateo's party and the dominant political party in Mexico—became more politically conservative.

The year 1964 saw the decline of one more politician involved in these exhibitions. Concerns provoked by the Cuban Missile Crisis helped motivate Khrushchev's own comrades to remove him from power. The Soviet exhibitions themselves cost tremendous amounts of money while the expanded trade generated little overall benefit for the Soviet economy. As Khrushchev's fellow Presidium member Dmitri Polianskii explained, "Comrade Khrushchev was pleased to announce that Stalin had not succeeded in penetrating Latin America whereas he had. First, the policy of penetrating Latin America had not been our policy. And second, this meant that our country had to commit itself to providing military supplies an ocean away, 15,000 kilometers."¹³⁴ The Soviet leadership did not abandon Khrushchev's policy of commercial and diplomatic engagement with Latin America, however, and the new General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev (1964-82) would end up further strengthening Soviet ties to the region. In 1974, Brezhnev made a well-publicized trip to Cuba, becoming the first Soviet head of state to visit Latin America. Argentina and Brazil became major Soviet trading partners. When US President Jimmy Carter (1977-81) imposed an embargo on American grain shipments to the USSR,

¹³³ Galán, "La Exposición Rusa," "Mikoyan [sic] Atacó a EE.UU., y se Declaró Miembro del PRI."

¹³⁴ Quoted in Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble*, 25.

Argentina and Brazil agreed to make up the difference with their own grain exports, rendering Carter's policy ineffectual.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Prizel, *Latin America through Soviet Eyes*, 35.

Conclusion

Given that the Soviet exhibition in Rio dwarfed its exhibition in New York, it could be argued that the USSR worked even harder to promote its message of peace and development to Latin American audiences than to US ones. The Soviet Exhibitions of Science, Technology, and Culture presented a Soviet self-image that was distinct to the forward-thinking Khrushchev era but also harkened back to past experience with modernization in the USSR's non-European republics. The exhibitions' showcasing of soaring scientific achievements sought to inspire awe and dispel myths of Soviet backwardness, while displays of consumer goods offered a vision of Soviet life that would seem familiar to middle- and upper-class Latin Americans. The US press might have dismissed the scope of these exhibitions as being limited to "Sputniks and rockets and economic progress under the seven-year plan,"¹³⁶ but the event organizers hoped to emphasize Soviet cultural sophistication as well.

The USSR faced many obstacles as it attempted to engage Latin American audiences at events such as these. In the years before the exhibitions, the US had gone to great lengths to prove that its model of development was the only path to prosperity and that the Soviet example would lead developing nations astray from true modernization. The launch of Sputnik in 1957, however, coupled with a rising wave of anti-US sentiment in the region opened a window of opportunity for the USSR to present its society and its successes on its own terms. Depictions of foreigners marveling at the USSR's achievements served to strengthen its image domestically. The Soviet press was keen to show that Latin American audiences no longer thought the USSR

¹³⁶ Peter Kumpa, "Visit to Cuba is Scheduled by Mikoyan [sic]," *The Baltimore Sun*, 1 Feb. 1960.

could produce only bread and beets and instead believed that they could learn from the Soviet example.

In their attempt to cater to audiences in developing countries, these exhibits employed several tropes familiar to the Soviet experience of modernization in the 1930s. The exhibitions depicted the Soviet system as one capable of overcoming impossible obstacles and mastering natural forces. Cultural displays and performances utilized both high culture and folk culture to demonstrate the Soviet commitment to cultivating true art in opposition to Western pop culture. In the face of Western claims that the USSR was not a developed country and that average Soviet citizens lived in poverty, the Soviet exhibitions presented Soviet socialism as a model of development that encouraged both extensive resource development and domestic consumerism.

Responses to these exhibitions in the Latin American press ranged from glowing praise to critical skepticism. The USSR now enjoyed wider recognition from Latin Americans as an example of quick and effective modernization in a poor country, yet Soviet ideology and the Soviet way of life remained inimical to most. In some instances, the Soviet appeal fell on deaf ears, yet the USSR saw anti-Soviet sentiment as the residue of Cold War propaganda that would be washed away as the USSR and Latin America developed closer relations.

The Soviet cultural offensive achieved a turnabout in Soviet-Latin American relations. By showcasing the USSR as a credible ally and trading partner, the exhibitions in Brazil and Cuba jumpstarted the development of friendly relationships that would eventually evolve into major bilateral agreements. There remained much that needed to be done, however, before the USSR could hope to become a major influence on Latin American politics, trade, and culture. The popularity of the exhibitions aroused the ire of the US, which in 1964 demonstrated its willingness to use violence as a means of asserting control in the region. And while Brezhnev

would continue Khrushchev's policy of economic engagement with Latin America, he did not share his predecessor's belief that establishing crosscultural connections with nonsocialist countries represented a viable means of promoting peace.¹³⁷ Therefore, the Soviet exhibitions in Latin America could be considered both major milestones in the USSR's developing relationship with the region as well as unique products of the idealistic period of Soviet history in which they were conceived.

¹³⁷ Prizel, *Latin America through Soviet Eyes*, 151-54.

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